

A PHILCSOPHY OF WOMAN AND MAN

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INTRODUCTION

What is to become of woman and man? Today this question presses urgently upon us. For the first time in history women and men are collectively thinking about their identity in relation to one another. The very relationship itself has been called into question. This urgency in questioning must be met by a full and considered response which incorporates all the relevant knowledge available to us at the present time. What is needed then is a philosophy of woman and man.

Since the first stirrings of human thought in the pursuit of truth, western philosophers have recognized the importance of the question: "What is and ought to be woman's relation to man and inversely man's relation to woman?" In addition, the other side of this question or "What is and ought to be woman's relation to woman and man's relation to man?" was also considered. Every major philosopher thought about these questions until philosophy became limited by too close an association with mathematics and logic. Previous to this limitation, however, the question of the relation between woman's and man's identity was usually thought by philosophers with intensity and seriousness. It was considered to be a central issue of metaphysics, natural science, epistemology, morals, and politics. In different centuries one way of considering the issue may have been more pronounced than another. For example, Greek and Medieval philosophers tended to emphasize metaphysics and natural

1. ^{First} The historical moment of this limitation came. So on
in the 12th-13th centuries when Aristotelian logic became
adopted in the faculty of Arts at the University of
Paris. The 17th century use of mathematics by
the Cartesians merely carried this moment further.

science; Modern philosophers tended to emphasize epistemology and morals; and contemporary philosophers tend to emphasize politics. However, even though the framework with which a philosopher approached the question might differ in historical periods, the answers to the question fell into one of three alternatives. Therefore, a pattern of response to the question of woman's relation to man can now be recognized and assessed.

The three alternative ways of approaching the philosophy of woman and man can be roughly called: sex polarity, sex unity, and sex complementarity. Sex polarity argues for a significant differences between the two sexes and for the superiority of one sex over the other. Sex unity argues that woman and man are equal but that there are no significant differences between them. Sex complementarity argues for both a significant difference between women and men and the equality of the two sexes. All philosophical discussions about the respective identities of woman and man may be classified as either one of the three above theories or as a combination of theories.

The contemporary question: "What is to become of woman and man?" has become particularly urgent to address because it is being raised today not only by philosophers but also by vast numbers of women and men. Indeed it might even be said that today philosophers are the only persons who are for the most part not raising the question. However, the question was originally thought by philosophers and it must become thought again by philosophers. It needs the depth of a philosophical

foundation, the clarity of a philosophical approach, and the breadth of a philosophical perspective. Philosophy ought once again to reassert itself at the center of discussions of personal identity instead of remaining content to observe the intellectual efforts of colleagues in other areas of the sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

The philosophy of woman and man will clarify the specific characteristics of the three alternative theories mentioned above, viz. sex polarity, sex unity, and sex complementarity. More importantly, however, it will seek to defend sex complementarity as the most correct theory about the relation of woman to man. Both sex unity and sex polarity will be seen to contain one major weakness which sex complementarity overcomes. The philosophy of woman and man then will lead to an affirmation of sex complementarity as the best answer to the question: "What is to become of woman and man?"

Before a contemporary defence of sex complementarity can be developed it is necessary to give a brief explanation of the ways in which each theory developed historically. The three alternatives are as common today as they were at the beginnings of western philosophy. However, the ways in which the theories are expressed changes in different historical periods. The following summary should ^{clarify} ~~make~~ this point ~~clear~~. ~~clear.~~

SEX POLARITY

Sex polarity is the theory that claims that women and men are significantly different and that one sex is superior to the other. Historically four different forms of sex polarity have emerged.

Traditional Sex Polarity

Sex polarity was given its first grounding by Aristotle in the 5th century BC. He argued that men were by nature superior to women. This superiority was evidenced most obviously in the patriarchal structure of society where men ruled and women obeyed. Aristotle sought to find a metaphysical foundation for this inequality between women and men. The concepts of matter and form provided the necessary framework for the differentiation of the sexes. Even though all human existents were a unity of material and formal nature, woman had a particular relationship to matter and man to form. Specifically Aristotle believed that woman provided material only in generation and man provided only form. The sexes became distinguished by this characteristic. Since Aristotle believed that it took a superior kind of activity to provide form, man became recognized as a superior kind of human existent. The female was described as the

1. "The male is by nature superior, and the female inferior, and the males, and the females, and the others in between. This principle of necessity extends to all animals." Aristotle, Politics 1254b 13-15.

2. "The female always provides the material, the male that which fashions the material into shape. This, in all cases, is the specific characteristic of each sex." Aristotle Generation of Animals, 738b 20-25. Aristotle gives a further justification for this difference through the claim that men are better than women. The leading point is the female's lack of her incapacity to provide for the generation.

privation of the male and woman was called a deformed and defective man.⁽¹⁾

Two further dynamics of sex polarity were also developed by Aristotle. Women became associated by definition with passivity and man became associated with activity.⁽²⁾ This polarization of the characteristics of the two sexes led to the situation in which their interaction was interpreted as a kind of hostility. Even when Aristotle considered the development of the sex of the fetus woman and man were described as being in a state of war. A male child signified the victory of the father and a female the victory, by resistance, of the mother.⁽³⁾

Traditional sex polarity, as developed by Aristotle, was perpetuated by a great many philosophers. In a somewhat weaker form it appeared in the second century AD in the philosophy of Galen.⁽⁴⁾ While Galen qualified Aristotle's view of woman's contribution to generation to include the presence of some kind of seed, he concluded that her contribution was infertile. Therefore, woman still was unable to be characterized as active in this fundamental sense.⁽⁵⁾ Galen ~~therefore~~ concluded that woman was a kind of mutilated man.

In the 12th and 13th centuries sex polarity was reasserted in a stronger form. Maimonides developed woman's association with matter and man with form by arguing that the term 'woman' is symbolically used for anything which must be in conjunction with something else. Form is able to exist without matter, but matter must have form to be anything at all. Man was able in patriarchy to have an independent existence,

1. "The female is a weaker animal, and the menstrual discharge is common to her in all her condition, i.e. it lacks one constituent, and one only, the principle of Seed." Aristotle Generation of Animals 737^a 26-30.
2. "The female, qua female, is passive, and the male, qua male, is active." Aristotle Generation of Animals 727^b 15-20
3. "If (the male semen) gains the mastery, it brings (the material) over to itself; but if it gets mastered, it changes and becomes into its opposite or else into extinction. And the opposite of the male is the female." Aristotle Generation of Animals 766^b 16-20.
4. "Aristotle was right in thinking the female less perfect than the male." Galen On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body B 14 (11, 296)
5. "The female semen is exceedingly weak and unable to undergo to that state of perfection in which it could impress an efficient form upon the fetus." Galen Ibid B 14 (11, 303)

but woman had to be joined to a man. (1)

The thorough ^{grounding} of Aristotelian sex polarity in western thought occurred through the combined efforts of St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas, and Giles of Rome. All three of these philosophers argued that man was superior to woman. They all completely adopted Aristotle's philosophical framework for justification of this theory. Woman provided matter and man provided form to generation. When the activity of generation was perfected a male child resulted. When it failed a female was conceived. (2) Consequently, the individual woman was a defective human existent who lacked something present in the superior human male. The view that one sex lacks something present in the other sex is a predominant theme in sex polarity. The 'inferior' sex is inferior in and through the specific lack.

Traditional sex polarity as first grounded by Aristotle and then regrounded by medieval philosophers took its basic expression from incorrect theories in natural science. The mistaken contention that woman provided material only to generation and that man only provided soul led to a false identification of the female with matter and the man with form. This metaphysical foundation had the further result that woman was associated with passivity and man with activity. Finally, man was thought to be superior than woman in all significant areas of human existence.

1. "Matter is in no way forced without form and is categorically always like a maimed woman who is never separated from a man and is never free" and "Thomas for the female woman uses used ^{moderndiminished} ^{any defect} ^{opt for} and ^{justified} with a view to being in conjunction with some other object" The Guide of the Perplexed, III, 11, 11 and I, 6 p. 31

2. "For the active power in the seed of the male tends to produce something like itself, perfect in masculinity; but the ^{procreant} of a female is the result either of the debility of the active power, or of some unsuitability of the material, or of some change effected by external influences, like the south wind, for example, and a cold damp atmosphere, as is said by Aristotle" St Thomas ^{Aquinas} Summa Theologiae 1a, 92, 1.

3. "As regards nature in the individual is female something defect and imperfect" St Thomas explains in saying that in the operation as a whole ^{because the difference between the sexes are needed in the process of generation} the female is not defect. Ibid.

Modern Sex Polarity

The first transformation of traditional sex polarity came about as a result of a shift in the preoccupation of philosophers away from the natural science of biology. The discovery by William Harvey in the 17th century that both women and men contribute fertile seed to generation refuted the Aristotelian argument for sex polarity. In addition, the fragmentation of knowledge which occurred by the separation of the faculties of medicine and philosophy in universities drove an intellectual wedge between thought about the person as a biological existent and thought about the person in other philosophically significant respects.⁽¹⁾ Sex polarity did not end with this discovery that Aristotle had been wrong about woman and man. Instead it reemerged with a different framework for its justification.

Women was still considered to be significantly different and inferior to man. In the 18th century Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that sex polarity followed from a law of nature which established a moral difference between the sexes. This difference characterized woman as passive, weak, and created especially to 'please' man. On the contrary, man was characterized as active, strong, and naturally rooted in power through patriarchy. At the same time Immanuel Kant argued that women ought to strive to be beautiful while man was meant to aim towards the noble or sublime.⁽²⁾ Both Rousseau and Kant based their sex polarity upon a belief in the different rational capacities of woman and man. While man was capable

① This division of faculties comes most strikingly forward to the fore of the University of Paris in the early 13th century. Philosophy and medicine are only now beginning to overcome this separation.

② From this division, comes the just and notable difference in the moral relations of the two sexes. One ought to be active and strong, the other passive and weak. One must necessarily will to be able; it suffices that the other put up with necessity. Once this principle is established, it follows that woman is made specially to please man. If man ought to please her in turn, it is due to a less direct necessity. His merit is in his power: he pleases by the sole fact of his obedience. This is not the law of love, degree but it is that of nature, prior to law itself. ... Rousseau Emile p. 358

③ "All the elements of a woman should unite solely to enhance the character of the beautiful, which is her proper reference point; and on the other hand, among the masculine qualities, the outline clearly stands out as the attribute of history." Emmanuel Kant of the Beautiful and the Sublime p. 70-7

of ethical judgments through the combined use of his reason and senses woman was limited only to sense. Therefore man was superior to woman in both reasoning capacities and moral judgments.

In the nineteenth century Schopenhauer continued to support sex polarity through epistemological arguments. Schopenhauer describes woman as weak, short sighted, and child-like in her reasoning capacities. She is tied to the present moment and unable to make abstractions. As a consequence he concludes that woman has no sense of justice.⁽²⁾ In a slightly different way Nietzsche argued that women were subject to a slave morality. Their weakness he likened to a kind of moral sickness which needed the strength of man.⁽³⁾ Even further Nietzsche argued that the inferiority of women's morality was a danger to man. The inverse side of sex polarity was the result that the inferior sex posed a real threat to the superior sex.⁽⁴⁾

Hegel continued this same basis for sex polarity. The woman was defined by her relation to the inner life of the family while man was defined by his capacity to overcome the subjective pull of the individual family and move out into the objective world of general society. The woman then is marked by her passivity and submissiveness within the family while man is characterized by an active power which propels him forward beyond the family. For Hegel, as for Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, woman's ethical limitations were a direct consequence of her inferior consciousness.⁽⁵⁾

One of the most striking aspects of modern sex polarity

is the fact that while the particular philosophers above were all involved in radical attempts to overthrow Aristotelian philosophy in its specific view of the nature of man, they all accepted Aristotelian sex polarity for the relation between woman and man. Aristotle had argued that women did have an inferior rational capacity to man. ⁽¹⁾ He also concluded from this that women were moral in different ways than men. ⁽²⁾ As previously mentioned Aristotle based his sex polarity primarily on arguments from zoology and metaphysics. The modern sex polarity theorists reach the same conclusion from slightly different premisses. They claim that nature made women and men with different reasoning capacities, and therefore man, by virtue of his superior reasoning capacity, is a more valuable being in the moral order.

insert
9a >

Contemporary Sex Polarity

More recently arguments for sex polarity have received a further transformation. Beginning in the nineteenth century with Sigmund Freud sex polarity theorists have attempted to support their theory by an appeal to a lived experience of the body. Freud's well known lecture on 'Femininity' contained a new rationale for the superiority and differentiation of the male human existent from the female. Women, he argued, were faced with the experience of the lack of male genital organ. As a result of this lack, they developed a basic psychological disposition towards 'penis envy'. ³ This

In another specific way modern sex polarity follows Aristotle's lead. The association of man with activity and woman with passivity survived in modern sex polarity even though the Aristotelian basis for this distinction, the separation of matter and form, was no longer used. For example, Kant and Rousseau associated woman with the receptive rational capacity of sensation and observation. Man was associated with the activity of discursive reason. Schopenhauer's insistence that woman lived in the present similarly denoted a passivity of character. Man's ability to transcend the present indicated his essential connection with activity. On the other hand, while Hegel and Nietzsche both considered woman to be an active being, they argued that her specific nature rendered her incapable of the proper channeling of this activity. She was, in a way, passive in relation to her own identity and situation. Man, on the other hand, had the capacity to actively organize himself and society at large. Therefore, Aristotle's legacy of the association of the passive with women and the active with men lived on in modern sex polarity.

1. "The woman has [a deliberative faculty] but it is without authority." Aristotle Politics 1260^a1-15
2. Since a woman's deliberative faculty has no authority, woman is virtuous by obeying a man, while man is virtuous by ruling women.
3. "The castration complex of girls is also started by the sight of the genitals of the other sex. ... They feel seriously wronged, often declare that they want to 'have something like it too', and feel a constant 'envy for the penis', which will have incalculable effects on their development and the formation of their character." Sigmund Freud New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis p 125.

fundamental psychic fact of women's existence explained her natural tendency towards the vices of vanity and narcissism. Furthermore, it led to woman's lack of the sense of justice. Freud, therefore, used an analysis of the lived experience of the body to explain the moral inferiority of women. He reached the same conclusion from analysis of the 'Oedipal complex'. Ethical judgments and the capacity to act ^{on} universal ethical decisions came from the ability to define oneself in relation to the ^{ego} superego. Men developed this capacity through their struggle to overcome the father. Since women had no such similar struggle they failed to develop the superego. Therefore, women had weaker ethical capacities.

Jean Paul Sartre developed another rationale for sex polarity from the lived experience of the body. He argued that woman was characterized as a hole to be filled, and man was characterized as an active being capable of filling this hole. Therefore, going further than Freud's description of the 'lack' in women, Sartre argued that the lack penetrated the inner recesses of the female body. While Sartre shunned discussions of moral worth of human existence, he none the less believed that a person who lived through an active projection of consciousness into the future was superior to one who merely submitted to the passivity of their situation. Therefore, his association of woman with the emptiness of a hole and of man with the activity of physical penetration clearly conveys a sex polarity framework. Sartre carries this analysis through even in his most political analysis of the relation of man and woman to industrial work. He argues that because men face the

1. "The fact that one is made to enjoy things
the sense of justice is no doubt related to the
predominance of envy in their mental life." Paré
Ibid p. 134.

2. "
cuck

3. "The obscenity of the female sex is that of everything that
'gapes open'. It is an appeal to being as all holes
are." and "The hole is presented as a nothingness to
be filled by my cum/boon." from
Hegel's
Phenomenology of Spirit
pg p 202. For a complete discussion of source
see Gregory L Collins and Christine (New York
Philosophy
Library)
Pina "Holes and Gaps: Surrogates for 'Gaps' in Psychoanalysis"
in Women and Philosophy pp 115-125

active sex' they do not allow themselves to fantasize while working as this activity would interfere with their work. Women, on the other hand, feel no such conflict because their fantasies of sexual abandonment correspond to their passive relationship to the machines which define their work. (f)

Contemporary sex polarity, as developed by Sartre, then carries with it the Aristotelian association of woman with passivity and man with activity. Once again it is most significant that a philosopher who is in nearly all other respects violently anti-Aristotelian in his arguments about man none the less argues for a sex polarity theory of woman which is decidedly Aristotelian. Sartre does not use any metaphysical foundation with reference to matter or form. Instead he bases woman's relation to passivity and man's relation to activity on his analysis of the lived experience of the body.

Freud developed a more sophisticated argument about the relation of passivity and activity to women and men. He claimed that both sexes were equally active on the fundamental level of the libido or sexual energy. In addition, a woman's lived experience of passivity in sexual intercourse was compensated by her lived experience of activity in nursing a child. He concluded, however, that a woman was characterized as giving preference to passive aims. In order to overcome her genital 'lack' women sought to recover this lack by being impregnated and then giving birth, preferably to a male child. In this way women actively work to become fulfilled

1. In certain situations, men are less likely to engage in sexual activity, this is because they are the 'just sex', the active sex, if they were to think of 'taking' a woman, their wife would suffer; conversely, women, by abstaining from sexual activity, cuts them off from sexuality. The woman who thinks about sexual abandonment, because she maintains regular contact with her conscious life in passivity, is actually passive, a bride, preventive vigilance and self-mobilizing herself into a state of vigilance." (Santo's expression) (critique of psychoanalysis) Alan Sheridan-Smith, trans. London: Humanities Press (1976) pp. 223-4

2. "One might consider channelizing femininity, psychologically ascribing properties to passive aims. This is not, of course, the same thing as passivity, to maintain a passive aim may call for a large amount of activity." Freud, 'sexual psychology' p. 113

through passivity.

The continuous association of women with passivity and man with activity can be seen as the frequent pattern in sex polarity theory. While the expression of this association may change in different historical periods, the basic concept remains the same. It involves a significant distinction between the sexes and the superior valuation of the male as the active sex. Aristotle's original explanation of this theory, the view that matter as passive most appropriately characterized the female and form as active most clearly belonged to the male, became the fundamental philosophical framework for all subsequent versions of sex polarity. The tremendous success of his philosophy in the formation of the categories of western thought can be called 'The Aristotelian Revolution'.

In spite of the above examples of sex polarity most contemporary arguments for this theory of sex identity are usually made by persons in fields other than philosophy. One reason for this fact is the mistaken contention of most philosophers that philosophy should concentrate only on the universal characteristics of all persons. Sexual distinctions then become excluded from philosophy proper.

Sex polarity is being supported today by writers in nearly every discipline in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. The most significant aspect of this multidisciplinary plethora of arguments for sex polarity is their return to a biological source of differentiation of the sexes. Contemporary

sex polarity then has even more in common with Aristotle than modern sex polarity. The psychologist Erik H. Erikson has argued that the presence of the uterus in women can explain a female preoccupation with 'inner space'. Men correspondingly move outward and build society because of their anatomical structure. ⁽¹⁾ Lionel Tiger in Men in Groups explains the same phenomena by appealing to arguments from sociology, anthropology, and biology. ⁽²⁾ He claims that the innate presence of the bonding instinct in males, and its absence in females, leads to the superiority of men in the public sphere. The writer Norman Mailer argues in The Prisoner of Sex that men are stronger because they have to assert themselves over and against nature in order to become men. ⁽³⁾ Women merely have to agree to be what nature has made them to be, namely to bear children for the species. Finally, Steven Goldberg draws upon a wide range of arguments from anthropology and biology in The Inevitability of Patriarchy to support the claim that society must be run by men who have the necessary instinct ⁽⁴⁾ for domination and leadership.

All of the above theorists have sought to redefine a theory of sex polarity over and against the arguments previously articulated by sex unity theorists. The specific nature of these arguments will be studied in the body of the present text. At this point it is important merely to recognize that sex polarity is still being defended, and that the nature of the varied defences appeal to biological differentiation

1. Erik H. Erikson
2. Lionel Tiger Men in Groups London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd. (1969).
3. Noran Mailer The Prisoner of Sex ^{Toronto} Boston: 1976, Knopf and Company (1971)
4. Steven Goldberg The Inevitability of Patriarchy, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc. (1973)

between women and men. They further give a superior valuation to men with respect to the specific characteristics being distinguished

Reverse Sex Polarity

There is another form of sex polarity which gives a superior valuation to women. Reverse sex polarity argues that women and men are significantly different and that women are superior to men. This form of sex polarity does not have as broad an historical base as traditional sex polarity. The obvious reason for this difference is found in the patriarchal structure of western society. Sex polarity in which men are valued as superior can be said to be simply the philosophy of patriarchy. Therefore, sex polarity which values women more highly is a reverse form of philosophy.

It is widely recognized that written western history has been primarily patriarchal. Even though other forms of symbolic communication may give evidence of matriarchal or matrilineal forms of society, philosophy as such has been informed with patriarchy. As a consequence, reverse sex polarity has only recently received its first fundamental grounding.

It could be said that impulses towards reverse sex polarity were seen in various forms of goddess worship, in myths about women, such as the Amazons, and in early poetry by Sappho. These impulses were eventually translated into arguments by Cornelius Agrippa in his essay On the Superiority of Woman over Man.⁽¹⁾ While a great many of Agrippa's arguments appealed to revelation, he also believed he had proven women's

1. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim,
On The Superiority of Woman over Men New York: American
 News Company (1873). "I make an abstract of
 this Treatise which explains the superiority of
 Woman over men by the name given to the
 first woman. By the order of time in which she
 was created; By the place of birth; By the
material of which she was made. We have
 proved it by religious, by natural, by
our own. From different authorities." p 23.

superiority to man by nature and by reason. In the twentieth century more sophisticated arguments for reverse sex polarity were formally developed by Ashley Montagu in The Natural Superiority of Women.⁽¹⁾ While Agrippa had claimed that women were made from a superior material, Montagu argued that women's biological nature was superior to man's in its greater survival strength. This biological superiority was further traced back to the chromosomal structure of the cells. Therefore, both of these arguments for reverse sex polarity appealed to biological differences between women and men.

The argument that women are superior to men because they have² more complete genes^{is stated} is repeated by the contemporary writer Valerie Solanis in the "SCUM (Society for Cutting up Men) Manifesto". She claims that the Y gene is an incomplete X gene and that the male is therefore an incomplete female. The male psyche then develops though an envy of women.⁽²⁾ Just as Freud argued that women had a weak ethical sense because of their biological situation, so Solanis argues that men do a wide range of wrong or bad things in the world. because of their biological situation.

A different kind of superiority of woman is defended by the writer Jill Johnson in "Woman Prime". She argues that woman's capacity to bear children proves that men are less self sufficient. As a consequence men become driven by an envy for woman's biological superiority. ~~The man's biological inferiority~~

1. Ashby Montagu The Natural Superiority of Women (New York: The Macmillan Company) 1953 "The natural superiority of women in a biological fact, and a socially excluded piece of knowledge," p. 184.
2. Valerie Solanis "Excerpt from the Science of Man: The Cult of Man) Manifesto in Substance by Valerie Solanis & Robin Morgan New York: Random House 1970 pp. 511-519
 "The male is a biological accident; the Y (male) gene is an incomplete X (female) gene... Being an incomplete female, the male spends his life attempting to complete himself, to become female." p. 514

envy of the uterus men become driven by a desire to destroy the female. ① Once again the evils in society are traced to a biological inferiority. The two examples of reverse sex polarity in Johnson and Solanis follow similar patterns to those found in sex polarity. A biological source of the inferiority of one sex is used to explain a kind of moral inferiority.

Other contemporary writers have chosen to give another kind of explanation for women's superiority in relation to man. Her greater moral worth springs from her situation as the innocent victim of oppression. Man's inferior value results from his continuous role as oppressor. Ti-Grace Atkinson argues in "Metaphysical Cannibalism" that men, in their desire to overcome death by the power of their will, force women into a subjection of body and mind. Women, who were made vulnerable through their biological capacities for child bearing, then become a functionally cannibalized class. Atkinson understands the roots of the differentiation of woman and man to be metaphysical rather than biological. However men are more to blame than women because of their destructive way of living out this basic metaphysical anger at human mortality. ②

① Bill Johnson "Resource Power in Lesbian Nation"

"All systems of inequality are rooted in male gendered imperatives of the male. The female is not originally the self-sufficient self-representing creature. The male one of her offspring. ... The cultural repression of women is rooted in womb envy." p. 187 New York: Simon and Schuster (1973).

See also "The woman is womb envy, and the man is his anxiety and longing to become a man of himself as pitiless himself against 'nature' (woman) in his creation of culture as a kind of monstrous compensation for his not a self felt inadequacy." p. 190. He also mentions that Karen Horney and Margaret Mead had previously mentioned a male envy of the female ^{characteristics both} although neither of these earlier thinkers used this theory to support female superiority.

② Tri-Gene Pittman "Anthropological Considerations" in American Odyssey New York: Basic Books (1979) (1982).

"The male-female distinction, the system of gender, is a social construction. In other words, this primary distinction, which is supposed to be fundamental as the difference between the sexes, is a social construction, a social system for just political class and power purposes. ... Certainly in the patriarchy, the female is the object of oppression, whereas the male is the subject and dominant. This is responsible for the distinction and spread of the disease." p. 101.

The most complete defence for reverse sex polarity is given by Mary Daly. In Beyond God the Father Daly argued that sexism (the practice of sex polarity) is the ' original sin' of the human race. Men, the perpetrators of this situation, then become devalued in a 'revaluation' of values present to reverse sex polarity. In the more recent Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism Daly claims that the basic characteristic of men is to carry a genocidal attitude towards women. This attitude expresses itself through the processes of the draining of women's energy as well as through aggressive practices of mutilation and destruction of women. Daly gives several examples of men's violence towards women in the practice of footbinding, suttee, clitoridectomy, witchburning, and contemporary gynecological practice. She concludes that men are inferior to women through their basically violent and aggressive attitude towards the world.

Reverse sex polarity is the clear inversion of traditional sex polarity. In both theories the sexes were considered to have significant differences. In the traditional sex polarity man was valued as superior, while in reverse sex polarity woman is valued as superior. This valuation is even seen in the association of activity and passivity with the sexes.

The continuum of characteristics which are related to activity and passivity can be seen in the following chart :

(1). Mary Daly. *Eccelesia Mystica*. Boston: Beacon Press. (1973).

2. Mary Daly. *Gyn/ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Women*. Boston: Beacon Press. (1978)
"The sacred rituals of patriarchy are performed, perpetuated. Their place of origin is the main place. The patriarchal world is created, perpetuated, and lived, everyday, in ritualized gymnastics" p. 112.

negative <

positive >

passivity

receptivity

activity

> negative
aggressivity

[female <]

[male]

[female]

[male]

The continuum is positively evaluated in the center and negatively evaluated as the characteristic moves to its extreme expression. Both total passivity or complete weakness is as much to be avoided as total aggressivity or violence. Sex polarity identifies the extreme characteristic with the devalued sex and claims the positive characteristics for the valued sex. In the traditional form it associated passivity with the female ; and in its reverse form it identifies aggressivity with the male. Sex polarity, in all its forms, distorts the basic equality of the sexes.

SEX UNITY

The second major theory about the identity of woman and man argues for the fundamental equality of the sexes. However, it further claims that there are no significant differences between woman and man. More recently this philosophy has been characterized as 'unisex'. Just as sex polarity has been seen to have different historical expressions, so sex unity has received different formulations in different time periods.

Traditional Sex Unity

Sex unity first appeared in western philosophy when Parmenides in the 6th century BC argued that all differences between female and male were merely appearances. In reality they were the same.⁽¹⁾ Plato soon after gave sex unity a more thorough metaphysical grounding. He argued that persons were primarily souls. Since souls had no sexual distinction they could be born in either male or female bodies. Therefore women and men were basically the same. As a consequence Plato argued that women and men ought to have equal education, equal work, and equal virtues.

Traditional sex unity was developed by Porphyry in a letter to his wife Marcella in the 3rd century AD. Porphyry argued that Marcella ought to strive for the highest wisdom and virtue because in her soul she was neither male nor female.⁽²⁾

(1) For Plato, men and women are different, the
offspring of different parents, and belong to different
classes.

(2) Plato Republic II 452b-c says that men
that they differ only in fact, not in nature, and
the female horses and the male horses, we shall
say that a pair has got both qualities
that the women differ from the men
for the purpose of Plato's idea of justice
justified for this equality, but I think
better for the state.

(3) Protagoras Letter to his wife
"We also count in reasoning that women have not as much as
men. But we do not say that they are not as good as men.
For as the women are by nature different from the men,
women, just as the men are different from the women." (p. 56.)

(4) The different classes of men and women
that in the state.

The metaphysics of reincarnation provided the fundamental basis for traditional sex unity. When reincarnation was rejected by western philosophers sex unity remerged in a slightly different form.

Modern Sex Unity

The second formulation of sex unity could more appropriately be called "Sex Neutrality". Within this theory sex differences are merely ignored, not argued about. In a paradoxical way, Aristotle's logic became the first foundation for sex neutrality. Aristotle, who had so firmly grounded sex polarity also developed a theory of definition which concentrated on species and genus. Since the differences between women and men were not differences in species, they were thought to be irrelevant to the definition of human being. When the universities became established in the 12th century Aristotle's logic became central to the study of philosophy. Differences between the sexes were studied in theology, medicine, or law. Soon sex neutrality became the accepted pattern of academic philosophy.

When philosophy became even further identified with universal definitions through the preference for a mathematical method in the 17th century, sex neutrality became even more deeply entrenched. In fact sex neutrality is the common pattern in academic philosophy today. Major books on personal identity contain no reference to whether the person is male or female.

Such important works as Gilbert Ryle's The Concept of Mind, A.J. Ayer's The Concept of Person, or Strawson's Individuals all reflect the sex neutrality model of philosophy. Other significant philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Austin, Husserl, and Heidegger similarly study the person within a sex neutrality framework.

Sex neutrality has recently come under criticism especially by reverse sex polarity theorists. It is important for the underlying assumptions of sex neutrality to be examined. It is significant that nearly every philosopher within the early 2000 year history of philosophy from 700BC to 1300 AD all rejected a sex neutrality model for the philosophy of woman and man. Each and every philosopher argued for some specific theory of woman's relation to man. Since sex neutrality merely became accepted as a consequence of the centrality of logic and mathematics to a philosophical method, it is extremely important to reconsider this situation in the light of contemporary knowledge.

The central place of Descartes in the modern sex unity theory must be emphasized. His love of mathematics gave a tremendous impetus to the sex neutrality theory. In fact, Descartes developed a rather astonishing description of the growth of the fetus. His analysis employed mathematical concepts and ignored any sexual differentiation.)

More significantly, however, Descartes' development of rationalism (the presence of reason in all persons) gave a new impetus to sex unity arguments. Cartesianism burst forth

1. Gilbert Ryle The concept of mind

Alfred North Whitehead The concept of a process

P.F. Strawson Individually

(2) Descartes original theory of the
dualism of mind and matter is a doctrine
que les connaissances des deux sont de nature
entièrement différente l'une de l'autre.
René Descartes 1621/6

L'homme est de par sa nature un être
composé d'âme et de corps (1627) Part 1, 1627, p. 126

in a wide range of arguments for the equality of the sexes. These arguments no longer appealed to a non sexually differentiated soul which might be born in a male or female body. Instead they appealed to the common nature of reason in women and men. Therefore, even though Descartes himself did not argue for sex unity, his philosophy became the main source for modern sex unity theory.

In 1622 Marie de Gournay wrote Égalité des hommes et des femmes (On the Equality of Men and Women).⁽¹⁾ Soon after, a personal friend of Descartes, Anna Maria von Schurman wrote The Learned Maid ; or, Whether a Maid may be a scholar? von Schurman parodied Aristotelian syllogism in her appeal to the equality of reason and desire for knowledge in women and men.⁽²⁾ In her argument ^{the first Cartesian scholar,} Seneca was also cited as a sex unity theorist. Probably the most far reaching philosophy of modern sex unity was developed by Descartes' disciple Foulain de la Barre in his 1673 text entitled De l'égalité des deux sexes (On the Equality of the Two Sexes).⁽³⁾ This major work developed arguments for the equality of women and men based on the similarity of the mind (or spirit) in both sexes.

The influence of Cartesian rationalism also spread from France to England. In the 17th and 18 centuries several works appeared in English for the first time developing arguments for the sex unity position. Mary Astell, Margaret Cavendish, The Duchess of Newcastle, Anne Finch, Countess of Conway, and the anonymous author of An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex all appealed to reason as the source for woman's equality with men.⁽⁴⁾ Sex polarity was seen to be the sole effect of custom.

1. Marie de la Barre Égalité des deux sexes
forme.

Anna

2. Maria to Schumann The Letter to Maria
, written to Maria Schumann 29

London: John Kohnman (1659)

"unproven both naturally and by the
may show the facts and reasons. But a more
highly naturally ordered of facts and reasons.
Therefore etc. The reason of the woman's
manipulation: because Nature does nothing in vain.
The mind is thus confirmed that which is
in the whole species in mind, is in every
individual in particular. Therefore, etc.
also. But all considered, Nature is not by
Nature a sort of knowledge (Quality
proph. 1, 2.) Therefore, etc.

- (3) Portrait de la Barre Élégalité des deux sexes

"Il est aisé de remarquer que la différence des
sexes ne regarde que le corps; n'y a point
proprement que cette partie qui se rapporte à la
procréation des hommes et des femmes ne faisant
qu'il y aient son développement, et le point
entant de la même manière, on peut
conclure qu'il n'y a point de sexe / Si on
le considère par rapport à l'âme, on trouve qu'il
est égal et de même à l'égard des
hommes, et c'est la même chose à l'égard des
femmes; les plus sages s'occupent comme
les plus grands." pp. 10-11

- (4) See Portrait de la Barre Élégalité des deux sexes

Sex unity became the logical result of the recognition that custom was not the necessary source for the definition of man's and woman's identity. The common presence of reason in all persons appeared to discard any significance of custom for the enlightened person.

Contemporary Sex Unity

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